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# PROCEEDINGS OF THE BACON SOCIETY.

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No. II.

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AT a meeting of the Society, held at No. 1, Adam-street, Adelphi, on 2nd July, 1886, Mr. Alaric A. Watts, Vice-President, in the Chair.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The Chairman, after a few preliminary remarks, called on Mr. Francis Fearon to read his paper—

## DID FRANCIS BACON WRITE SHAKESPEARE?

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Before reading his paper, Mr. Fearon made the following preliminary remarks:—

THE objects of the Society are by its constitution declared to be twofold (1) The study of the life of Francis Bacon and his acknowledged writings. (2) The investigation of his supposed connection with other works of which his authorship is unacknowledged, and notably the Shakespearean dramas and sonnets.

The latter topic is one which has recently excited afresh the interest both of those whose minds have before been turned to it, and of others who had never before heard of it.

It has been thought that under the circumstances, an evening night, even at this early stage of the Society's existence, be advantageously spent in an exposition of some of the arguments which have been adduced in support of the theory, that the Shakespearean dramas were not the work of Will Shakspeare, but of some learned man behind the scenes, and that this man was none other than our Society's hero, Francis Bacon.

I could sincerely have wished that the task had fallen to someone more competent than myself to do justice to the subject: but I trust that I shall be followed by other members of the society who will fill up the necessarily brief sketch of the subject to which I must confine myself this evening: and that we shall on future occasions have a series of more detailed disquisitions on the different branches of the argument.

I particularly lament that our fellow member and, I may truly say, our founder, Mrs. Henry Pott, is prevented by illness from being here this evening, as she has made this branch of the subject peculiarly her own; but I am sure that it will be a matter of satisfaction to her that our Society should have devoted one of its earliest meetings to that field of the Society's investigations in which she has so laboriously and successfully worked.

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DID FRANCIS BACON WRITE SHAKESPEARE? The natural answer would be, "Certainly not. Can the tradition of three centuries be wrong? Were our ancestors ignorant? Was Shakspeare himself an impostor? Were his contemporaries and friends deceived? Were his successors of the next generations unable to detect the imposture?"

"Do you mean to say that there is any serious doubt that *Will Shakspeare*, the acknowledged author of the wonderful plays that bear his name—the Swan of Avon, canonised as the divine bard for three centuries—wrote the plays?"

"No, no, sir; I won't have it. Shakspeare has always been Shakespeare to me, and so he shall remain.

"And as for Francis Bacon—Lord Bacon having written Shakespeare's plays! Why introduce that heavy and philosophic person on the scene? What had he to do with the matter?"

"Certainly, now you mention it, the two men lived at about the same period, but two persons more differently moulded in notions and ideas you could hardly have mentioned together.

"Had Lord Bacon written a play, it would have been a ponderous disquisition in dialogue, a legal or philosophic essay

in blank verse. And as for his having written Shakespeare's plays, why, good gracious! sir, what do you mean? You are labouring under a serious mental delusion. Betake yourself to some quiet retreat, and stay there until you have cleared your mind of it, and have returned once more to the orthodox belief that Will Shakspeare wrote the plays that have passed by his name; a belief which was good enough for our fathers and our grandfathers, and may well suffice for us."

Such, I take it is, with little exaggeration, the sentiment with which the majority of persons first hear the idea propounded that the Will Shakspeare of history did *not* write the plays which have so long gone by his name, and that Francis Bacon *did*.

Nevertheless, if you will favour me with your ears, I will endeavour to do something to convince you that there is, at all events, some method in the madness of those who, like myself, are converts to the new and spreading belief.

What, then, is Shakspeare's title to the authorship? Of course he claimed it to himself?

Strange as it may appear, there is no record of his having done so; and yet he seems to have been a bustling man of the world, by no means diffident; a money-making manager of a theatre; not a person likely to have hid his own light under a bushel, but one who would rather have boasted, and made the most of his literary attainments; one who, in making, as he did, a will entering into details of his chattels and effects, down to his old bedstead, would not have been silent, as he was, as to his manuscripts and literary property, which would, had he possessed any, have been the source of his fortune. Surely he would have appointed a literary executor, with directions as to the revision and republication of his plays. Nine of the thirty-seven plays usually credited to Shakspeare were never heard of until seven years after his death, and all of the thirty-seven were in that year published, with considerable emendations by some master-hand unknown. The 1623 Folio has 36 plays. Of these, 18 were printed then for the first time—four

more were so changed, matured or developed, as to be practically new. Therefore, for the text of 22 out of 36 we are dependent on the Folio. Of the remaining 14 only 9 are not seriously changed from the original quartos. The remaining 5 are so altered that, although the original quartos are good, the altered editions in the Folio are alone authoritative.

But do not the plays themselves bear external evidence of his authorship? Is not his name upon them? and was this inscription ever challenged?

It seems to be hardly understood that seven of Shakespeare's plays—*Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II.*, *Richard III.*, first part of *Henry IV.*, and second and third parts of *Henry VI.*—were originally brought out without any author's name on the title-page; that six editions of the poem, *Venus and Adonis*, and four of *Lucrece*, were also thus published. Several editions of the poems, and of certain plays, were published before 1616. Of these editions, twenty-seven had no author's name on the title-page.

And when the name of Shakespeare did appear outside the printed edition, and assuming (what is not by any means the fact) that what gets into print and is not challenged is authentic, it may be noted that the name outside the plays is Shake-speare, with a final "e" to each syllable, and, generally, a hyphen between the syllables—a mode of spelling which, I think I am right in saying, was not recognised by Will Shakspeare himself. In the Records of the Stratford Town Council—of which Mr. John Shakspeare, the father of William, was a member—the name was spelt in fourteen different ways, one hundred and four times with an "x," indicating that the name was pronounced with the "a" in the first syllable short.

The theory of the "Baconians" is that the name Shakespeare, was a *nom de plume* of Francis Bacon, who had good reasons for wishing that the plays should not be published under his name, and that when it was necessary to put forward some author's name, none fitter or more popular than that of the rising and popular theatre-manager could be adopted for the purpose; that the name was purposely distinguished by the

different spelling; that the plays were sent in, probably anonymously, by the author to the manager (Shakspeare) of the Blackfriars Theatre,\* who adapted them for the stage, introducing, perhaps, some of the low comedy business into them, and brought them out; that Shakspeare was the producer, not the composer of the plays.

The reasons Bacon and his friends, who were in the secret of the authorship, had for wishing that during his life, or immediately after his death, he should not be recognised as the author, were cogent. The stage and drama were at that time at the lowest ebb. Players, and playwrights, and poetasters, were ranked among the class of "ne'er do weels," vagabonds, sowers of sedition and disorderly persons. Henry VIII. and Elizabeth had uttered proclamations against stage plays as tending to immorality, disorder in the State, and depravity in religion. Bacon's mother was a strict Puritan, and her son's connection with the stage as a playwright would have been a great offence to her.

Besides such personal motives for remaining a concealed poet, Bacon had, no doubt, a stronger motive. In those days, when neither daily papers nor periodicals existed, the stage was the readiest means of publishing opinions on any subject. Bacon intended by his plays to inculcate advanced opinions on many subjects—reforms in law, statecraft, manners, natural philosophy, and religion. The days were dangerous. Men were liable to be imprisoned, tortured, slain even, for their opinions and beliefs. The theory is, therefore, that Bacon then adopted the method of the ancients, (which he himself expounds and commends), and clothing himself in the humble weed of the poor player, he poured out to ears, many of which hearing heard not, the thoughts and aspirations of his myriad mind.

But to return to the circumstantial evidence bearing on the subject. There are no manuscripts of the plays extant. It is said that the copies of their parts were supplied to the actors

\* This occupied the site of the present *Times* office.



by the manager, Shakspeare, in his own handwriting, and “without a blot,” a fact which is to my mind strongly against his authorship; for a busy and prolific composer does not, if he can help it, write fair copies for distribution, and certainly not without alteration or blot.

But is the character and career of the man himself an indication that he was the author?

If we had no knowledge or record of him, it would be better for his reputed title to the authorship; as it is, we know just enough of what manner of man he was to find great difficulty in recognising the possibility of his having produced such learned, elegant, and varied masterpieces as those which bear a colourable imitation of his name.

The history of his life, so far as it is known, is very shortly as follows:—

Born at Stratford-on-Avon in 1564, the son of John Shakspeare, butcher, wool-stapler, or glover; his mother, Mary Arden, of peasant family; neither parent of any reputed ability or learning. Supposed to have been for a short time at the Stratford Grammar School; but there is no authentic evidence of even this short period of tuition. There is also a tradition that he became a country school-master, and legal critics, despite of any tradition, are sure that he was once employed in a lawyer's office; but no hint of his having become remarkable in either capacity, and both stories seem to be rather an inference from the legal and other large knowledge and learning apparent in the plays than based on any real record or tradition.

He married at eighteen. There are local traditions that he followed his father's trade as a butcher, and used to make a fine speech before killing a calf; of his having been in the habit of drinking at pot-houses and clubs, hunting coney for amusement, and poaching in the neighbourhood, until Sir Thomas Lucy, the resident squire, after a more than usually aggravated case of poaching by him, prosecuted him, the result being that he soon after left Stratford, and went in 1587 to London. There he is reported to have made his living for a time by holding



horses at the Globe Theatre, then working his way into a situation inside the theatre, and then coming, by degrees, to be employed as a "super," and "walking," or "utility gentleman."

Now the commencement of the phenomena. A few years after his arrival in London appeared the poem, "Venus and Adonis," dedicated to the young Earl of Southampton, a friend of Bacon, whom Shakspeare could hardly have known, unless from holding his horse at the door of the theatre.

Disregarding its subject, it is one of the most elegant pieces of rhetorical poetry that English literature has produced to this day. Such a production from a young countryman—country school-master, if you please—who could only have known the Warwickshire dialect, had had little opportunity for refined study of the English language, and who had been earning his bread by holding horses, and was now engaged in a minor capacity inside a theatre, would, I think I am justified in saying, have been not only a phenomenon, but a miracle. Some of the sonnets, very finished productions, also appeared, and some of the earliest plays are also supposed, by some critics, to have seen the light about this time.

It is contended by some that Shakspeare was connected, either as assistant or partner, with an able bookseller and publisher of the day; that he frequented coffee-houses; that in the bookseller's shop, during the intervals of business, he had access to books which enabled him to study; and that in the coffee-houses, which were also frequented by some of the wits and men of the world of the day, he acquired his extraordinary knowledge of men and things.

If this training for genius were so efficacious in his case why has it not since been found to be so? Why is not now the culture of our young geniuses effected by giving them the use of a limited library and the society of a club? What need of schools and Universities, studies and lecture rooms, daylight abstinences and midnight oil, if all that innate cleverness needs for its most successful development is access to certain books, varied by intermittent conversations with clever men, in their intervals of relaxation at a club?

Shakspeare gradually rose in his profession of an actor, but never acquired eminence in it. He acted *in* Hamlet—not the part of Hamlet, but the Ghost. He is described at this time by an unfortunate dramatist named Robert Greene, who seemed to attribute his own failure to the successful rivalry of the new author, as being “an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger’s heart wrapt in a player’s hide supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you, and being an absolute *Johannes factotum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a countrie.”

In 1596 he is living in Southwark. In 1598 he has risen to be a shareholder and manager of the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres, and is rich enough to buy New Place, at Stratford. We hear of him lending money, and acting, and visiting Stratford once a year.

In 1599 he obtains a grant of a Coat-of-Arms from Heralds’ College; buys more land at Stratford.

In 1601 his father, who had failed in business, dies.

In 1603-5 he is in a flourishing condition; still manager of the Globe, in which he was one of the largest shareholders. He acts before the Court; buys more land at Stratford.

In 1608-9 we hear of him as plaintiff in small actions against his fellow townsmen at Stratford for recovery of small loans, or malt delivered.

In the period from 1593 to 1609 the wonderful plays appear, one or two, or more, a year. The earliest plays are supposed by some critics to have appeared in 1585, about the same time that Shakspeare left Stratford.

In 1610, when he is in the prime of life, at 47, he retires to Stratford-on-Avon, and betakes himself—to study and literature? no;—resumes his old calling as woolstapler.

The Shakespeare Plays now cease to appear, and this just at the time one would have thought that Will Shakspeare had acquired the learning and leisure to write with increased zest.

In 1611 he appears as a party to a lawsuit at Stratford with a neighbour.

In 1614 his friend John Coombe, bailiff to the Earl of

Warwick, dies. The following is one of the authentic poetical productions of the real William Shakspeare :—

*“ On John A. Combe, a covetous, rich man, Mr. William Shakspeare wright this, att his request while he was yet living, for his epitaph :—*

“ ‘ Ten in a hundred lies here engraved ;  
 ’Tis a hundred to ten his soul is not saved.  
 If anyone asks who lies in this tomb,  
 “ Ho ! ho ! ” quoth the devil, “ ’tis my John a Combe ! ” ’ ”

*“ But being dead, and making the poor his heirs, he (W.S.) afterwards wrights this for his epitaph :—*

“ ‘ How ere he lived judge not :  
 John Combe shall never be forgotte  
 While poor hath memory ; for he did gather  
 To make the poor his issue, he their father,  
 As record of his tilth and seedes  
 Did crown him in his later needes. ’ ”

Truly, the style of William Shakspeare had deteriorated—in his old age ?—no, his maturity ; he was now 51.

Other specimens of poetry of a like kind are quoted by Mr. Appleton Morgan, who has made a complete collection of the authentic poetical works of the real William Shakspeare, all of which are sheer doggerel.

On 23rd April, 1616, Shakspeare died at Stratford-on-Avon. In the diary of Mr. Ward, Vicar of Stratford, occurs this entry :—“ Shakspeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson drank too hard, for Shakspeare died of a fever thus contracted.”

I have omitted reference to a number of traditional anecdotes, all of a more or less disreputable character, as they may not be true ; they are, however, based on the same traditional evidence as the rest.

The death of the reputed author of the plays attracted no contemporary attention.

Such is the character, career, and exit of the man who, we are asked to believe, was the author of the plays which are a phenomenon, not only in English letters, but in human experience, and the like of which the literature of no other country has produced.

An author's inner life is usually manifested in his writings. Is there any other instance on record of the life and character of the individual having been such a misfit with the works he is credited as having produced? I think not.

And did his contemporaries believe him to be the author of the plays?

There is not much evidence either way, but it is pretty clear that the ability and profound learning of the plays was not realised at the time. They were 200 years ahead of the audiences of the day: and for that reason the general theatre-going public who saw on the play-bill that the plays were by Shakespeare, (if indeed the play-bills of the day named the author), took it for granted that they were written by the manager, William Shakspeare. The classical allusions and learned references which the plays contained were *caviare* to them, but few people capable of gauging their merits as works of literary excellence went to the theatre or interested themselves in stage plays, much less in their authorship.

The only person of weight whose opinion on the subject has been expressed, who was competent to judge, and ought to have known what he was writing about, was Ben Jonson, a friend both of Shakspeare and of Francis Bacon. In 1623, seven years after Shakspeare's death, he wrote some verses prefixed to the folio edition of Shakespeare's plays published in that year, in which he refers to Shakespeare's writings as

"——— Such

As neither man nor muse can praise too much."

The following are extracts from this laboured panegyric :—

"———Soul of the age,

The applause, delight and, wonder of our stage  
My Shakespeare rise."

"Leave thee alone for the comparison,  
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome  
Sent forth or since did from their ashes come.

"Yet must I not give nature all; thy art,  
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part;  
For though the poet's matter Nature be,  
His *art* doth give the fashion."

If these verses stood alone, although forced, and not having the true ring of hearty admiration, they still would be evidence of Ben Jonson's belief in Shakspeare's authorship of the plays. But panegyric is not proof. On the contrary it is usually much in advance of proof; and it may be written to order.

Moreover, when a man writes one day in prose and another in verse, and inconsistently, on the same subject, his prose utterances should prevail.

Ben Jonson in his prose is not consistent with himself when writing, for the publishers, the above poetical preface to the Shakespeare plays. For as regards the above allusion to Shakespeare's art, and his acquaintance with the histories of Greece and Rome, Ben Jonson afterwards told his close friend, William Drummond, that Shakspeare "wanted arte;" and, further, in Ben Jonson's "Discoveries," in a memorandum devoted to the eminent men of that and the preceding generation, no mention is made of Shakspeare, but Bacon is referred to specially as "He that hath *filled up all numbers*, and performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred to insolent Greece or haughty Rome"—*the very words he has used of Shakespeare in the above dedicatory poem*, prefixed to the first complete edition of the plays, and a style of eulogy quite inapplicable to Bacon's acknowledged writing: for it implies that Bacon had produced dramatic poetry comparable to that of the classic poets of Greece and Rome.

I have dwelt on this part of the argument longer than I believe it deserves, because there is little doubt that the above dedicatory poem of Ben Jonson has been the making of Will Shakspeare.

Is it so very unreasonable to suppose that the verses addressed in honour of Shakespeare were written in innuendo, with intention to the real author under the pseudonym he bore? and that Shakspeare's popular name (misspelt) was attached to the folio by the publisher for its market value to sell the book?

But did not the family of Shakspeare say or do anything to establish their kinsman's fame and memory as the author of the plays?



There is no record of their having done so, and the epitaph they allowed to be inscribed on his tomb says nothing of it.

And what is the evidence of the plays themselves?

I can only say that I have always felt a difficulty, amounting to an inability, to bring my mind to believe that, except by inspiration or miracle, a man of Shakspeare's education, antecedents, and associations, could have written any of them, but least of all, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Lear*.

The plays, sonnets, and poems, when printed in one volume, occupy upwards of 1,000 very closely printed pages, containing nearly 200 lines on each page.

The contents show not merely that the writer was a cultivated man with wide, yet on the whole aristocratic sympathies, and a knowledge of character, especially in the higher walks of life, so that he could most readily represent the discourses and manner of speech, not of butchers, wool-staplers, and farmers, village politicians, and the like, but of kings, queens, nobles, courtiers, and statesmen; and also that he had an intimate acquaintance with Latin and Greek classical authors, history, state politics, the art of war, natural philosophy, chemistry, horticulture, law, medicine, the theory of music; so much so, that he was able, as it were, to play with his knowledge of these latter subjects, turning metaphors upon them by use of words and phrases relating to them which were unknown to the ordinary run of people.

The knowledge which the writer of the plays possessed of the French, Italian, and Spanish languages, the habits of the people, and the places, is also evident.

In *Julius Cæsar* not an ideal ancient Rome, but the real one, is accurately portrayed.

In the Italian plays, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Taming of the Shrew* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, intimate acquaintance in small details is shown with the Italian towns and manners of the people, details which could hardly have been acquired by any one who had not resided abroad, or had not received detailed descriptions from some intimate friend on the spot.



The *Comedy of Errors* is discovered in these latter days to be identical in argument with the *Menæchmi*, a play of Plautus, the Latin poet, then hardly known, and untranslated.

Mr. White, in his "Shakespeare," says that Iago's speech, "Who steals my purse steals trash," is a perfect paraphrase of a stanza in Berni's untranslated poem, *Orlando Innamorato*.

In *Two Gentlemen of Verona* Valentine is made to embark at Verona for Milan, and in *Hamlet* Baptista is used as the name of a woman. In another play Bohemia is referred to as having a sea coast. These things were sneered at as mistakes for some hundred years, until one learned German discovers that Baptista is not uncommonly used as a woman's name in Italy, another learned German that in the sixteenth century Milan and Verona were connected by canals, whilst a third has discovered that "Bohemia" formerly included a much larger tract of country than it does now, and did stretch down to the coast.

The above are a few, out of many, instances.

What inducement could Shakspeare, the manager of the Globe and Blackfriars Theatre, have had to introduce carefully studied details and dark and subtle allusions such as these? It was not this out-of-the-way knowledge and learning in the plays that would draw, for very few of those who attended the representations could perceive or appreciate it.

It must have been introduced for the satisfaction of the writer of the plays, who must have been no novice, but a learned and cultivated man, who was imbued and could play with his knowledge. He must have had books of his own or have had access to the best libraries of the day. He must have been a deep reader and thinker, a man whose mind was not only well stored but teeming and brimming over with knowledge. Even if there were no person to whom these wonderful plays could be fitly attributed the inference would have been the same; there must have been some very clever and erudite man in the background who wrote them.

And what is there unlikely in the notion that Shakspeare, the busy and successful theatrical manager, the Mr. Augustus Harris of the period, a well-to-do, prosperous, bustling man,

should have "kept a playwright" whose brains he used to write his plays. Shakspeare's taste lay in the bringing out of plays, and management of the stage business. This work of selection of the plays, and of the actors, the choice of the *caste*, and the rehearsals, is now-a-days one man's work, especially in bringing out plays of such length as Shakespeare's. This must have been much more the case 300 years ago, when the business was not so well understood, and actors were not so educated and intelligent a class as now. Shakspeare's object, which he attained, was to make his theatre pay, and make money, get a coat of arms, buy land, and retire to his native place. Playwriting was a laborious, not a paying business. Four or five pounds was the stock price, it is believed, of a play in those days. Shakspeare would not have grown rich, as he did, if he had employed his labours and energies first in acquiring the learning and literary skill necessary to write the plays; and secondly, in writing them. His contemporaries, Ben Jonson and Bacon, both literary men of the first order, were poor men for the greater part of their lives, whilst Shakspeare, the actor and theatre-manager, grew rich, and lent Ben Jonson money.

No, surely, there is nothing unreasonable in the theory that some able man in the background wrote the plays; some one who had good reason for keeping his name unknown, and who was satisfied to use as his cover Shakspeare, the popular theatre-manager of the day, who, at all events for the time, was to be allowed the credit of them.

Such a theory seems to me a sensible and practical one. It alone explains not only the encyclopædic information of the writer as to matters of fact, but the scholarly refinement of the style of the plays.

The theory that Francis Bacon was the man behind the scenes is not a new one, although it has taken long in forcing its way to the front, especially in Will Shakspeare's own country.

Dr. Thompson, of Melbourne, points out that the first to raise the question was Horace Walpole, in his "Historic Doubts,"

Mr. Spedding, the writer of Bacon's life, as early as Feb., 1852, printed a paper, "Who Wrote Shakespeare's Henry VIII.?" tracing signs of two hands in the play. He was followed by an anonymous writer (Mr. Jameson) in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, who for the first time discussed the question, "Who wrote Shakespeare?" and arrived at the conclusion that William Shakspeare *kept a poet*. Neither of these writers suggested any claimant for the honours in Shakspeare's place.

It was reserved for a lady, an American lady, Miss Delia Bacon, four years later, to first propound the theory, in a paper published in *Putnam's Magazine*, in America, in 1856, that Lord Bacon, her namesake by coincidence, was the Shakespeare wanted. Men stood aghast and sneered at her in her own country. She came to England to find all men and women arrayed against her. She womanfully adhered to, and preached the belief which had taken possession of her. Some few people were convinced, but her book fell dead. She returned to her own country and soon afterwards died, disappointed and broken-hearted. Her book is full of knowledge and thought, but is so mystical, obscure and allusive that few people have ever managed to read it thoroughly.

In September, 1856, our member, Mr. Wm. H. Smith (not the ex-Lord of the Admiralty), who had not heard of Miss Delia Bacon, appeared on the field with his pamphlet entitled, "Was Lord Bacon the Author of Shakespeare's Plays?" a letter to Lord Ellesmere, in which the Baconian theory was plainly laid down and maintained, and he next year published a book on the subject. This book made a convert of Lord Palmerston.

In 1862 Judge Holmes, of the United States, in his book, "The Authorship of Shakespeare," first pointed out in print a number of coincidences or identities of thought and language between the two writers, Bacon and Shakespeare, and expressed his clear opinion that Shakespeare, as a dramatist, could have been none other than Bacon in disguise.

In 1880, Dr. Thompson, of Melbourne, in his "The

Renascence Drama, or History made Visible," presented an accumulation of fact and argument in favour of the Baconian theory.

In 1881, Mr. Appleton Morgan, a lawyer, published at Cincinnati a book, "The Shakespearean Myth," \* in which he stated the strong circumstantial evidence against the Shakespearean authorship of the plays. His theory was that they were the work of Lord Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, and others.

The latest publications on the subject have been by our member, Mrs. Henry Pott. The idea of the Baconian authorship of the plays of Shakespeare presented itself to her mind independently about twenty years ago, and was not suggested by any previous writer on the subject. She had then heard neither of Miss Delia Bacon, or Mr. W. H. Smith, or Judge Holmes, or Dr. Thompson, or Mr. Appleton Morgan; but the belief came to her from the coincidence of her equal taste for both the great authors, Bacon and Shakespeare, and the fact that the more she read them, the more the identities of the author's minds and ideas protruded themselves from their writings and impressed themselves on her mind.

Mrs. Pott has published Bacon's "Promus of Formularies and Elegancies";† being notes, mostly in Bacon's handwriting, of which many appear to have been made by him with a special view of enriching his vocabulary, and of helping his invention or imagination.

Mr. Spedding, Bacon's biographer, did not publish the whole, but only specimens, of this collection of notes, because he said plainly he could make nothing of them in connection with Bacon's prose works.

Mrs. Pott has taken these notes, 1,655 in number, and has in most instances found their setting not so much in Bacon's prose works as in the plays of Shakespeare.

\* Robert Clark and Co., Cincinnati. I am indebted to Mr. Appleton Morgan for many facts and suggestions stated in this paper.

† Longman & Co., Paternoster Row.

Mrs. Pott has also published the *brochure*, the title of which has been adopted for the question of this evening, "Did Francis Bacon write Shakespeare?" in two parts; Part I. of which gives in a succinct form thirty-two reasons for thinking that he did; to some of which I will refer presently; and Part II., "A Comparison of the Lives of Bacon and Shakespeare."\*

Latterly the subject has been a good deal discussed. Up to April, 1884, no less than 255 books, pamphlets, and articles had been published on the subject, of which 70 were English, 161 American, 10 Australian, 4 Scotch, 3 Canadian, 2 German, 2 French, 1 Indian, 1 Italian, and 1 Dutch.† The general result to that date was

For William Shakspeare	...	...	117
Against	...	...	73
Doubtful	...	...	65

There has been, therefore, a good deal of literature on the subject, and the case is now fairly before the public.

The incidents and associations in the life and career of Francis Bacon stand out in remarkable contrast to those of Shakspeare, and fit far better one's notion of those required to form and mould the character of a man capable of being the author of the plays.

Bacon was born in 1561, three years before Shakspeare, at York House, Strand, son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Treasurer, and Lady Ann Bacon. It is said that men are what their mothers make them. Lady Ann was the daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, tutor to Edward VI., a lady of superior learning and attainments. She was well read in the classics, corresponded with Archbishop Jewell in Greek, and translated into English from the Italian some deep theological works.

In boyhood, Bacon, intelligent beyond his years, exhibits early a quick observation, love of nature and curiosity about

\* F. W. Parry, 29, Paternoster Row. I am also largely indebted to Mrs. Pott's publications for the subject matter of this paper.

† A list of these has been compiled and published by Mr. W. H. Wyman, or Cincinnati, under the title of "Bibliography of the Bacon-Shakespear Controversy;" a Supplement to this Collection, bringing the list down to a later date, has been published in *Shakesperiana*.



physical facts. Introduced in childhood into the highest and most intellectual society, his readiness and wit attract attention. Queen Elizabeth notices him, and calls him her young Lord Keeper. He outstrips his tutors at home, and is sent at the early age of twelve to join his brother Anthony, two years his senior, at Trinity College, Cambridge. Whilst at Cambridge, it is said that he ran through "the whole circle of the liberal arts"; but left Cambridge without taking his degree, dissatisfied, it is said, with the method of study he found there.

Sent, at seventeen, as an *attaché* to the Court of France, he travels in the wake of the Court through the provinces which are the scene of 1 *Henry VI.*, learning French, Italian, and Spanish, and studying foreign policy.

When he is eighteen his father dies, leaving him badly off; he is driven against his inclination to the profession of the law. Meanwhile he resides with his mother at Gorhambury, St. Albans, the scene of 2 *Henry VI.*; that play is full of allusions to events and personages connected with St. Albans.

His brother Anthony, at this time, goes to Italy, and resides there for thirteen years. The correspondence between the brothers concerning Anthony's travels and experiences in Italy are believed by Baconians to have suggested the scenes and particulars in the plays of the second period.

At twenty-one Francis is called to the bar. Little is now heard of him except that he remains studying at Gray's Inn or visiting his mother at Gorhambury; not loving his law studies, but labouring doggedly at them, and making himself master of the subject; his hours of recreation spent in literary and philosophic pursuits. To this period Baconians attribute sketches of several of the plays afterwards produced.

His studies and occupations continue to be unremunerative; he falls into debt; appeals to those in power to give him work which will enable him to live as a gentleman, and afford him congenial occupation.

In 1586, when only twenty-five years old, he is made a bencher of Gray's Inn. His late hours, mysterious occupations, and studious seclusion, are invidiously commented on by his mother.



In 1587, when he is twenty-six, his dramatic inclinations show themselves. He assists in getting up the Gray's Inn revels, the presentation on the stage of *The Tragedy of Arthur*, and some masques, performed before Queen Elizabeth.

At twenty-seven he is elected M.P. for Liverpool: for several years after this a briefless barrister, with much time at his disposal, which Baconians think that he occupied in sketching the plays and the sonnets, which are supposed to have been written about this time, and in acquiring the knowledge and erudition necessary for the production of them and his greater prose works. To the year 1591 is attributed the first part of *Henry VI.*, the scene of which is laid in the same provinces of France as those which formed Bacon's sole experience of that country; also *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which reflects Anthony's sojourn in Italy.

Henceforward the Shakespeare Comedies exhibit the combined influence of Anthony's letters from abroad with Francis' studies in Gray's Inn.

The beginning of 1592 finds Anthony returning to England, residing with Francis in Chambers, the two brothers fulfilling the duties of Secretaries to the Earl of Essex; their salaries unpaid. Francis embarrassed for want of money forced to get help from the Jews; later on, actually cast into a sponging house by a "hard Jew" on account of a bond debt. Anthony, on returning from abroad, finding his brother thus distressed, mortgages his property to pay his brother's debts, and pledges his own credit to relieve him.

Baconians believe that *The Merchant of Venice* derives its origin from these episodes, that in *Shylock* Bacon immortalised the "hard Jew," and in *Antonio* his own generous and unselfish brother Anthony.

In 1867, Mr. Spedding discovered in the library at Northumberland House, among some of Bacon's manuscripts of about the year 1594, indorsed on the outside leaf of a device by Bacon, entitled, "A Conference of Pleasure," a list of other manuscripts which formerly lay with it. This list includes, among other things, Orations at Graie's Inn Revels, by Mr. Francis

Bacon; Essays by the same; *Richard the Second*, *Richard the Third*. There are no known Essays by Bacon of the latter names. The outside leaf is scrawled over eight times with the name "William Shakespeare." It also has the long dog-Latin word, "*honorificabilitudinitatibus*," which is introduced in *Love's Labour Lost*, and the line,

"Revealing day through every cranny peeps,"

from "*Lucrece*." But "peeps" is not the word in *Lucrece*; it would have been a better word, but the rhyme required "spies," which is substituted, and "peeping" occurs subsequently in the same stanza, lines 1086—1092.

It would seem from this, that at one time, this outside leaf covered Orations and Essays, by Bacon, side by side with two compositions of the same names as the two historical Plays of William Shakespeare, that this compilation had some connection with William Shakespere, whose name is bescribbled on the exterior. And one inference is that the two compositions so bound up with Bacon's writings were none other than the original manuscripts of the two plays in question. The leaf also seems to have been used as a memorandum slip by Bacon, or by his amanuensis.

In 1592-3 the poem, *Venus and Adonis*, to which I have referred, is published with a dedication, and given by Shakespeare to Bacon's young friend, Lord Southampton. Bacon afterwards became alienated from Southampton on the score of his disloyalty. When the poem was republished, the dedication to Southampton was omitted.

In the Autumn of this year, 1593, the plague breaks out in London; Bacon suspends his Lectures in Gray's Inn and removes to Twickenham Park.

In 1594 we find him taking a leading part in a grand dramatic entertainment at Gray's Inn. Anthony, about this time, leaves his brother and goes to live near the Bull Inn, in Bishopsgate-street, where ten or twelve of the Shakespeare plays were acted.

In 1595, on his soliciting the office of Attorney or Solicitor-General, he is passed over, and retires, much hurt, to Twickenham.

About this time he makes the following entry in his private collection of notes (Promus Note 1165), "Law at Twickenham for merry tales."

The merry tales for which he was thus preparing are believed to have been some of those plays (especially *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *2 Henry IV.*, and *Alls Well That Ends Well*) soon to appear, full of legal points and allusions, which so much exercised the mind of Lord Campbell.

Bacon's life is now retired and private, his time and attention are mainly devoted to philosophical and literary work. The plays appear at intervals, and continue to do so during the next twelve years.

In a letter of about this date to his intimate and confidential friend, Sir Tobie Mathew, Bacon, whilst alluding by name to certain of his own published works, speaks of his "other works," "works of his recreation." He also writes, "Those other works of the Alphabet are, in my opinion, of less value where you now are than at Paris; but in regard that some friends of yours have still insisted, I send them you."

The following private note of Bacon's in the Promus Notes (516), Mrs. Pott thinks, explains the meaning:—

*Isdem e literis efficitur Tragœdia et Comœdia.*

Tragedy and Comedy are made up of one Alphabet.

In other words, that the "Alphabet" was a password for the Tragedies and Comedies, the manuscripts of some of which Bacon was sending to Sir Tobie Mathew.

"What these works of the Alphabet may have been," says Spedding, Bacon's biographer, "I cannot tell, unless they related to Bacon's cipher."

In 1623 Bacon writes to Sir T. Mathew about "putting the Alphabet in a frame;" if this was their cipher, the frame was the 1623 folio. Such enigmatical talk between two friends is evidence that they were both interested in some secret, which they would not openly refer to.

We have recently heard some startling news from America regarding Mr. Donelly's detection of a cipher running through "Shakespeare," the clue to which he states that he has discovered, and in which Bacon's authorship of the plays, together with Will Shakspeare's connection with them, are explicitly stated.\*

In 1600 Bacon writes, speaking of his mother at Gorham-bury, and of his desire to keep her from anxiety, her health being very worn. From this time, until her death, nothing is heard of this clever, commanding woman, except Bishop Goodman's remark that she was "little better than frantic" in her old age. It is a coincidence that at this time the symptoms of madness have evidently been closely studied by the author of *Hamlet* and *Lear*, whoever he may have been.

In 1601 the trial of Lord Essex (in which Bacon had, by express command of the Queen, been compelled to take an unwilling part), followed by his execution, must have been a great misery to Francis and Anthony Bacon. To Anthony, who had been in bad health, the shock was such as to hasten his death. This further terrible blow to Francis, the death of "Anthonie his comforte," his "beloved and loving brother," added to his mother's lamentable mental condition, and the other trying circumstances of his life at this time, rendered it indeed a dark period, such as Shakspearean commentators have discovered in the plays *King John*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Othello*, which date from this period, and which Shakspeareans have attempted, rather unsuccessfully, to harmonise with facts in the life of the now rich and prosperous manager of the Globe Theatre.

About this time Sir Tobie Mathew, in one of his enigmatical letters to Bacon, says, in acknowledgment of some work not specified, "I will not return you weight for weight, but *measure for measure*." Comparing this with the rest of the mystical talk passing between them, it seems plain that

\* See Mr. Percy Wallace's article in the "Nineteenth Century Review," of May, 1886; and the detailed reference to it in the "Bacon Society's Journal of Proceedings," of June, 1886.

the plays were connected with the enigma, and that Sir Tobie Mathew's and Bacon's jargon about the "Alphabet" belongs to the same topic as "*measure for measure*."

In 1603 Queen Elizabeth dies, and James I. is crowned king. Bacon writes to Sir John Davis, the poet, asking him to give him a good word with the king, concluding his letter with the mystic words, "So desiring you to be good to *con-cealed poets*, I am," &c.

To this year, 1603, *Othello* and *King Lear* are attributed. Both Plays have a hit at the patents and monopolies, the abolition of which Bacon was concerned in bringing about.

In 1605-6 is passed an Act of Parliament against witches, James believing in their influence, and Bacon partly sharing in the belief. *Macbeth* appears in this year; in it, mixed up with Bacon's enquiries into witchcraft, is found much which exhibits his Studies of the Winds, of Dense and Rare, and of the Action of Mind upon Body, etc.

In 1606, when in his 46th year, Bacon marries Alice Barham, a lady of fortune. The marriage does not appear to have been a happy one.

In 1607 Bacon is at last promoted to the office of Solicitor-General.

In 1610 *Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*, are published. *Winter's Tale* includes a number of Bacon's observations on horticulture, the virtues of plants, and other matters connected with his notes on the "Regimen of Health." *Winter's Tale* also contains Bacon's peculiar doctrine about *Art* as being "nature in bonds"—a doctrine which Bacon claims as his own, never recognised before.\* *Cymbeline* reflects some of his remarks on vivisection, and his observations on the effects of poisons, as also does the *Anthony and Cleopatra*.

Bacon is a fellow-member with the Earls of Pembroke, Southampton, and Montgomery in the Virginian Company, which sends out to the West Indies a fleet, which is terribly vexed by storms; the ship "Admiral" is wrecked on the Bermudas. To these incidents we probably owe the production of *The Tempest*.

\* See *Aug. Lib.* ii. c. 2; and compare this with *Winter's Tale*, Act iv., sec. 3, l. 86—89.



In *The Tempest*, also, we see distilled into poetry Bacon's later "Studies of Heat and Cold," "History of Winds," "Ebb and Flow of the Sea," "Sailing of Ships," and other subjects.

From this time until 1623 new plays cease to appear. Bacon was during this period engrossed in his work as Solicitor-General, and, later, on the Bench.

In 1612 Bacon, then an officer of the Crown, but still having the dramatic fervour strong on him, takes a leading part in a grand masque presented by the gentlemen of Gray's Inn and Inner Temple on the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine; and in the following year, 1613, he prepares and defrays the whole of the large cost, £2,000, of another masque in honour of the marriage of his patron the Earl of Somerset with Lady Essex.

In 1614 Bacon is returned M.P. for Cambridge University. In 1616, the year of William Shakspeare's death, he is appointed Privy Councillor.

In 1617 he is made Lord Keeper. His extraordinary assiduity, quickness, and energy in his work are the wonder of his biographers. It is recorded that in his first four terms as a judge he made 8,798 orders.

In 1618 he is appointed Lord Chancellor. In this year the decrees made by him amounted to no less than 9,181, not one of them appealed against.

During this period to 1621, when he is created Viscount St. Albans, he spends money freely; is over generous and indulgent to his servants and retainers, like Timon of Athens, the principal character in the play of that name, which he is supposed to have written in satire on his own weakness in that respect.

In 1621 he falls. Accused by disappointed suitors, against whom he had given judgments, of having taken bribes, he admits receipt of gifts, fines, fees, and presents, some by his officers, and some by himself, in accordance with the customary mode of payment at those times. His salary as Lord Chancellor was only £120 per annum, a sum which would manifestly have been inadequate for maintenance of the dignities



of his office, without the suitors' fees, which were part of the acknowledged perquisites of this office. He confesses to this abuse, which belonged to the Court, but denies that he ever in the least degree accepted fees to the perversion of justice, and this latter charge against him has practically been of recent years abandoned: he resigns the seals, and retires to Gorhambury. In 1621 he writes his "*History of Henry VII.*," a very remarkable historical narrative of the only reign of that period which had not been deemed sufficiently interesting to form the subject of a play of Shakespeare. In 1622, two years after his fall, in a letter to the King, he quotes in his original draft the following words, omitted in the fair copy: "Cardinal Wolsey said that if he had pleased God as he had pleased the King, he had not been ruined. My conscience saith no such thing; but it may be if I had pleased men as I have pleased you, it would have been better with me."

In the following year the play of *Henry VIII.* appeared for the first time, seven years after Shakspeare's death, and in it the since well-known words in Wolsey's mouth.

The *Henry VIII.* is one of the nine plays which were not heard of in Shakspeare's life-time, or till the full edition (in 1623) of plays attributed to him, amongst which it for the first time appears.

In 1623, Sir Tobie Mathew, in answer to a letter from Bacon which was accompanied by a present to Sir T. Mathew, which the latter refers to as being "a great and noble token of your lordship's favour" (query, was the present a copy of the new edition of the plays just published?), says in the P.S.: "The most prodigious wit that I ever knew of my nation, and of this side the sea, is of your lordship's *name, though he be known by another.*"

It is a significant fact that in this year, when Bacon had fallen into poverty, Ben Jonson, his friend, exerted himself greatly to procure the sale of Shakespeare's Plays, though Shakspeare had died rich in 1616.

In 1625 Bacon publishes "*Translations of Certain Psalms,*" the poetical beauty of which are commented upon by Mr. Spedding. These translations were composed during a severe

illness, and are dedicated to George Herbert, a relative of Mr. William Herbert, the "W. H.," to whom the Shakespeare sonnets were addressed.

In 1626 he dies, from a chill contracted in the course of a drive in a snow-storm in March, when he tried, by stuffing a chicken with snow, to learn whether putrefaction could be arrested by cold. He thus seems to have been the first to attempt in England the preservation of meat by freezing, a subject which after the lapse of 260 years has come into prominent attention.

He was buried in St. Michael's Church, St. Albans.

By his will he refers to the durable part of his memory, which consisteth of his writings, and desires that his manuscript compositions should be given to his brother-in-law, Constable; refers to the fragments of some that were not finished and might be fit to be published.

Such is the career, contemporaneous with and overlapping at both ends that of William Shakspeare, of a man who, it is hardly too much to aver, *alone* of all men of the day had the knowledge enabling him to write, the time and opportunity, as well as the energy and inclination, for writing the plays and poems which have hitherto passed as Shakespeare's. The dates of Bacon's life fit perfectly into the dates of the plays—the dates of Will Shakspeare's life are absolutely out of harmony with the dates of their appearance—the later plays never appeared till long after his death; especially *Othello*, first published in 1622, republished with changes, additions, and omissions in 1623. (*Why?*)

I can only refer shortly to the strong *internal evidence* which the plays contain of their Baconian authorship.

Mrs. Pott, after most exhaustive researches and comparisons, discovers facts which go far to prove this. And here I cannot do better than refer to some of her "Thirty-two Reasons."\*

She finds that the knowledge which is contained in the plays concerns subjects which Bacon particularly studied, and which

\* See note, p. 53. It is impossible within the scope of this paper to give any of the numerous examples and instances which Mrs. Pott quotes in support of her reasons.

were not subjects of common study in his day; that Bacon's science is reflected in the plays; that so are his opinions—opinions personal to himself and in advance of his time on such subjects, for instance—

The influence of the philosophy of Aristotle on learning.

The abolition of obsolete laws.

Legislation on weights and measures.

Punishment and putting down of duelling, then fashionable.

The aping of the French in arms, speech and gesture.

The condemnation of the use of cosmetics, then also fashionable.

That Bacon's very errors are repeated in the plays. A misquotation of his on a somewhat special subject is reproduced in the plays.

Mrs. Pott also finds and quotes instances (where there are several editions of a play) of Bacon's increased knowledge and new interests being seen reflected in the later editions.

She identifies the vocabularies of Bacon and Shakespeare as to a surprising degree the same; this similarity being all the more striking when compared with the dissimilarity of the words used by Bacon with those used by known or contemporary authors, whose vocabularies she has also, for the purpose of her investigation, carefully examined.

This is so much the case that the Shakespeare Grammar of Dr. Abbot is announced, in the preface by that distinguished philologist, to be intended for students of *Shakespeare and Bacon*.

That Bacon's most familiar expressions and terms of speech are common in Shakespeare, though not common to the language of the period.

That linkings of ideas, combinations of words, similes, metaphors, and figurative forms of speech, of which a large collection has been made by Mrs. Pott, are found to a surprising extent in both authors.

That 95 points of style selected by Mrs. Cowden Clarke in her Shakespeare Key, as having specialities and characteristics of Shakespeare's style, have all been found by Mrs. Pott in the prose works of Bacon.

The superstitions, religious beliefs, and opinions on Church matters, and studies of the Bible, so clearly traceable in the plays, are plainly acknowledged by Bacon.

The authors whom Bacon prefers, and the study of whom he recommends, are those whom the learned have declared must have been studied by Shakespeare.

The omissions of things conspicuous by their absence, are the same in both groups of works.

It might be naturally expected that a poet like Shakspeare, born and bred in the country, would have given some kind of description of, or scene in, a country town or village, a village green with rustic dancing, maypole, a smithy, a country inn, fair, or market. There are none of these in his plays—no harvest home, haymaking, or Christmas merrymaking, nor any of the small pleasures of country life; no brewing, cider making, fruit or hop-picking; no reaping, gleaning, or threshing; no scene in a farm or country gentleman's house; no description of homely occupation, or any kind of trade.

It might naturally be expected that the father of a family, as Shakspeare was, would have much to say of *children*, but they are conspicuously absent from his plays. Bacon married late in life, and was childless.

Then there are the 1655 Promus notes, mostly in Bacon's handwriting, which Mrs. Pott has unearthed from the British Museum and brought to light. Time will permit only of a very slight reference to these, but I will, with your leave, refer to two groups of these notes.

Folio 111 of the notes begins with five forms of morning and evening salutation—half French, half English:—"Good morrow," "Good swoear," "Good matens," "Bonjour, Bonjour, bridegroom!" "Good day to me and Good morrow to you." These forms of salutation, "Good morrow," and "Good day," since become so common, were not, as Mrs. Pott has pointed out, known in England 300 years ago. The usual greeting was, "How now, sirrah," "How now, my lord." Mrs. Pott's belief is that Bacon introduced these amenities into England after his sojourn in France, and that he did so through the medium of the plays—for "Good morrow" occurs in the

plays nearly 100 times, "Good night" as frequently; "Good day," and "Good eve," above 15 times, and scarcely at all in other authors.

But another still more curious point. The above quoted entries—"Bonjour, bonjour, bridegroom," is followed by the notes, "Good day to me and Good morrow to you." "*Rom̃*," with the note of contraction over the e. "Late rising, finding a bed. Early rising, summons to rise." "Lodged next." "Golden sleep." "Up early and never ye nearer." "A bed, rose you out bed." "Uprouse. You are up." "Sweet for speech of the morning." "Well to forget."

Putting together these 12 or 13 small notes, we seem to be in possession of some of the leading points which were to be introduced into the following passage in *Romeo and Juliet*:—

BACON.

SHAKESPEARE.

<i>Rom̃</i>	<i>Romeo.</i>	<i>Good Morrow, Father !</i>	
<i>Goodmorrow.</i>	<i>Friar.</i>		Benedicite !
<i>Sweet for speech of the morning.</i>		What <i>early tongue</i> so <i>sweet</i> saluteth me ?	
<i>Up early and never ye nearer</i>		Young son, it argues a distempered head	
<i>Lodged next</i>		So soon to bid good morrow to thy bed ;	
<i>Golden sleep.</i>		Care keeps his watch on every old man's eye,	
<i>Abed, rose you, out bed, up-</i>		And where care lodges sleep will never lie;	
<i>rouse, you are up.</i>		But where unbruised youth with unstuffed brain	
		Does couch his limbs, there <i>golden sleep</i> doth reign;	
		Therefore thy earliness doth me assure	
		Thou art <i>uproused</i> by some distemperature.	

There are in this same folio other notes, apparently with intention to *Romeo and Juliet*.

Were there but one of these notes corresponding with a passage in the play, the fact might be a coincidence, but the occurrence of two or three, the counterparts of which are found in the same passage, make it a matter of strong circumstantial evidence, and cumulative proof, that the notes were either intended for *Romeo and Juliet*, or taken from *Romeo and Juliet*. Dr. Abbott unwillingly admits this.

To my mind, they cannot have been notes from the passage of the play which Bacon had read or heard, because they do



not give the main points of the passage; they are isolated stones of the fabric.

If Bacon had read or attended a representation of the play, and the passage quoted had struck him, he surely would not have been content with the very fragmentary notes of it which I have cited; would he not have quoted the sentences instead of the single words? He would not have noted the passage—

*“What early tongue so sweet saluteth me?”*

by this entry, “*Sweet for sp. of the morning;*” nor would he after hearing or reading the passage—

*“Young son it argues a distempered head,  
So soon to bid good morrow to thy bed.”*

have written down such an unimproved version of it as

*Up early and never y<sup>e</sup> nearer.*

Surely the improved version of the passage in the play must have been the flower of which the note was the seed. And the seed was in Bacon’s private notes.

The word *uproused* in the passage is a newly-coined one here; it does not appear to have existed previously in the language. Bacon’s mode of working up and arriving at the word and the phrase, “thou art uproused,” is darkly shown by the notes—

*“A bed—rose you—out bed—uprouse—  
You are up.”*

I may add that, although the date of *Romeo and Juliet* seems to be still a matter of debate, its publication has usually been assigned to 1597, three or four years later than the date of the Promus notes referred to, supposing them to occupy their proper place in the series of notes.

There are numerous other notes which are almost equally striking, when contrasted with passages in the plays.

A few concluding words. I am afraid I have wearied you, but I think you will admit that the subject is an extremely



interesting one and deserves close investigation, and that there really is something, and a good deal, to be said on the question, "Did Francis Bacon write Shakespeare?"

No one who has studied Francis Bacon's acknowledged works will willingly grudge him any honour which should prove to be his due.

If it should be established, even at this late hour, that he is the real author of the wonderful Shakespeare plays, as well as of the great prose works which bear his name, I venture to think that there are few but will rejoice that if Will Shakspeare is to come down from the pedestal (on which he did not himself claim to be placed), Francis Bacon should be the person declared to be the rightful occupant of it. Such a result would, amongst other things, disprove once more the theory that mere genius, without painstaking study and labour, can produce learned and erudite works; that it was given to Shakspeare alone of mortals to despise the golden rule, "There is no royal road to knowledge." It would prove, what would naturally have been predicted, that the plays were not the production of heaven-born genius and intuition, but of genius and ability, moulded and strengthened by intense industry and study: that the writer of the plays followed his own injunction put into the mouth of one of his characters, "Take pains, be perfect."

This is an age of inquiry, and the question of the real authorship of the famous and immortal plays is fairly one upon which inquiry should be encouraged by all lovers of truth, and should not be, as some staunch Shakespearians would have it, suppressed and stifled.

If there is a "Shakespeare-Bacon craze," I humbly maintain that the craze may have been with our ancestors, who have handed down to us a tradition against which intelligence rebels—the tradition that an illiterate man composed some of the most cultured masterpieces of the dramatic and poetic art that ever adorned any country, and that the craze has hitherto affected ourselves who have blindly followed this vain tradition of our elders.

If Shaksperc's claim to the authorship fails, that of Bacon, in my humble opinion, will be found to hold the field. As Mrs. Pott puts it—"If the evidence in favour of Bacon's authorship can be disproved, by all means let those disprove it who can. The cause is open, let the pleadings on both sides be fairly heard. But the question which has been calmly and thoughtfully asked must be wisely inquired into and answered:—

"DID FRANCIS BACON WRITE SHAKESPEARE?"

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### H A M L E T ' S   N O T E - B O O K . \*

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Mr. William D. O'Connor is the writer of a book with this somewhat sybilline title. "Hamlet's Note-book" is the tablet in which he preserves

"All trivial fond records,  
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past.  
That youth and observation copied there."

And as this is a fairly accurate description of Bacon's "Promus," Mr. O'Connor's title indicates that the "Promus" is his topic. When Mrs. Pott published the "Promus," with introduction, appendices, and copious Shakespeare annotations—with the object of proving that all these rough miscellaneous records, saws, forms, hints and observations were collected partly for the purpose of being used in the construction of Shakespeare's plays—she was attacked in the *Atlantic Monthly* by Mr. Richard Grant White, in an article entitled "The Bacon-Shakespeare Craze," which was in truth one of the most strangely disingenuous (we must not use a stronger word) articles ever admitted into a respectable journal. The flagrant injustice of this paper stirred Mr. O'Connor's soul, and he wrote a criticism of this bad review which was

\* "Hamlet's Note-book." By William D. O'Connor. Houghton, Mufflin and Co. Boston and New York, 1886.

"accepted by a leading magazine and held for publication." But pending its appearance Mr. White died. And Mr. O'Connor, with a deference to the deceased reviewer which strikes us as excessive (for, "the evil that men do lives after them"), suppressed his paper, and resolved to leave the "Promus" undefended from Mr. White's attack. But when a posthumous collection of Mr. White's Shakesperian Studies was published, and this same article reproduced, with all its slanders and insolence, Mr. O'Connor considered that the restraint which he had imposed upon himself was cancelled, and "Hamlet's Note-book" is the suppressed vindication of Mrs. Pott's edition of the "Promus" against Mr. White's attack. This vindication is accomplished in a very masterly way. It strikes us, however, that occasionally Mr. O'Connor has been a little too much infected by Mr. White's slashing style, and that his censure would have been quite as effective if the swish of his rod had been less resounding. This indeed is a small matter. Mr. O'Connor is not unfair. He does not garble and mutilate his author, as Mr. White did, in order to put poison and pungency into his stings. His criticisms are perfectly just, and he has no difficulty in showing that Mr. White's strictures were ingeniously and constructively the reverse. Mr. Grant White's offence does not so much consist in the use of rude and unmannerly language, though this is bad enough. It is the determined attempt by misrepresentation, by mutilated quotations, by ignoring strong points and emphasizing weak ones, and by all sorts of rash and reckless assertions, to blast and ruin a book which deserved only kind and generous treatment.

For in truth Mrs. Pott's book, whatever we may think of its main intention, is one of the most earnest attempts ever made to deal fairly and thoroughly with an interesting and difficult literary problem. Her own discussion of this problem is a model of lucid statement, and sweet reasonable temper. There is not a line in the book that deserves ridicule or rebuke. It is, moreover, a work of amazing labour and research. The amount of close analytic reading that it represents, the condensed result of which is given in the most modest and unpretending style, is astonishing. It is, of course, amenable to criticism, which it

invites, and even demands; and it is open to any critic to object to Mrs. Pott's arguments and inferences, provided he at the same time does justice to her intention, and gives due prominence to the limitations she herself claims.

For a very large number of these Shakespearian illustrations are manifestly relevant, and may be coupled with the "Promus" entries without hesitation. Others are less clear, but they raise most interesting questions as to Bacon's literary methods, and the distance which his artistic soul could travel from the verbal *corpus* of an idea, without losing hold of the vital thread by which the organic relation is sustained. This is a very intricate and delicate problem, not to be solved by one enquirer, but left for settlement by successive generations of thoughtful and sympathetic critics. But Mr. White ignored all the delicate speculative texture that makes Mrs. Pott's annotations at once highly interesting, very stimulating, and yet very debateable. He picked out some of the least obvious correspondences, and presented these as a sample of the best and most striking. And even in those which he selected for animadversion he in many cases left out the significant parts of the annotation, and then proceeded to lavish unmeasured scorn and insult on the passage thus mutilated.

We cannot afford space to illustrate these assertions, which are abundantly proved by Mr. O'Connor, and we may add that Mr. O'Connor takes up all the cases selected by Mr. White, and not only shows how entirely Mr. White misconceived them, but by his own added comments brings out their beauty and significance, so as to prove what a wealth of thoughtful research Mrs. Pott has secreted in her annotations. We may, however, give one illustration, which we select, not as a specimen of Mr. White's worst offences, but as a case in which he is dull and Mr. O'Connor acute, and as a case in which we have a little additional comment to supply.

Mr. White writes :—

Perhaps one of the most startling of these illustrations is that of *A Ring of Gold on a Swyne's Snout* (687), which degrading satirical comparison is presented as the origin of Romeo's beautiful extravagance

"like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." The absurdity of this is not at all apparent without a consideration of the whole of the lover's simile [which, in reality, adds probability to Mrs. Pott's annotation, and shows that she ought to have given the whole in her quotation].

" 'It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;'

which is but a variation of the passage in the 27th sonnet:—

" 'Save that my soul's imaginary sight  
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,  
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.'

It would seem then, that the solemn figure of Night, with her dark, begemmed robe, was suggested to the author of *Romeo and Juliet* by a pig's snout, with a ring in it to keep it from rooting.

This is Mr. White's felicitous comment, and here is Mr. O'Connor's reply:—

So that upon his reading of the "Promus" note, swine had gold rings put into their snouts to keep them from rooting—a rather costly accoutrement, one would say; and this is quite equalled by the hocus-pocus process with which he gets solemn Night with a dark begemmed robe, out of the negrine cheek and ear in *Romeo's* simile, and out of the swarthy and ghastly face of eld evoked by the sonnet! There is no absurdity whatever in Mrs. Pott's coupling of the line with the "Promus" note. They are both signal examples of antithesis, and of the same kind. The essence of "A ring of gold on a swine's snout," is the contrast of something beautiful with something ugly, and the essence of "A rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear," is in precisely the same contrast. An identical principle of creation underlies both similes, and might a thousand such, all ostensibly different.

This is a perfect refutation of Mr. White's blundering bats-eyed criticism, and we may add that the habit of presenting the same idea in a ridiculous and a sublime setting is quite in Shakespeare's manner. Here is a case exactly in point. The fantastic forms which imagination may find in clouds is the common basis of two very different passages. Here is the comic form of the observation.

*Hamlet*.—Do you see that eloud, that's almost in shape like a camel?

*Polonius*.—By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

*Ham*.—Methinks it is like a weasel.

*Pol*.—It is backed like a weasel.



*Ham.*—Or, like a whale ?

*Pol.*—Very like a whale.—*Hamlet*, Act iii., sc. ii.

A comic utterance that has passed into a proverb. And here is the sublime form of the same idea:—

*Ant.*—Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish :

A vapour, sometime, like a bear, or lion,

A tower'd citadel, or blue promontory

With trees upon't, that nod unto the world,

And mock our eyes with air ; thou hast seen these signs :

They are black vesper's pageants.

*Eros.*— Ay, my lord,

*Ant.*—That which is now a horse, even with a thought

The rack dislimns and makes it indistinct

As water is in water.—*Ant. Cl.*, Act iv., sc. xii.

Our readers will also recall the sublime passage about being “Possessed with double pomp, . . . To gild refined gold, to paint the lily, . . With taper light, to seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,” and its comic facsimile in Touchstone's paradox, “Honesty coupled to beauty is to have honey as a sauce to sugar.” It is notable that the Promus note for these passages 688, “*To help the sun with lantornes*” follows immediately upon this same 687, “*A ring of gold in a swine's snout ;*” and 686, “*Juxta fluvium puteum fodere*” (“To dig a well by the river”), indicating that Bacon, when he made these three entries, had the sublime and ridiculous sides of one idea in his mind—and the futile (686), or grotesque (687), or fantastic (688) alliances between art and nature—and was probably ruminating in exactly the same vein as Mr. O'Connor and the present writer. May we venture to add that Mr. Richard Grant White might have made better use of the pearls thus cast before him, than to “root” and sniff at them, and then toss them away as worthless, not to mention the turning aside to “rend” the hand which brought the costly gift.

This may be taken as a fair illustration of the suggestive quality of the “Promus,” and the unlimited expansion of which it is capable by elaborating the unworked suggestions supplied by Mrs. Pott's annotations. Mr. White, learned critic as he is, often judicious and sagacious, well seen in Elizabethan lore and literature, no sooner fronts the Bacon



theory than all his fairness and sagacity deserts him, and the man who prided himself on having earned the distinction of being "Shakespeare's scholar," does his best to crush all this mine of Shakesperian illustration out of existence. If Mr. O'Connor's exposure helps to antidote the injurious impression produced by Mr. White's attack, under cover of criticism, it will serve a good purpose. We cannot pretend to exhibit all the scope of Mr. O'Connor's book, and we are obliged to leave his episode on the sonnets entirely unnoticed, only adding that we are quite unable to accept his conclusions respecting them.

It is to be remarked that, however large and well-earned may be Mr. Richard Grant White's reputation as a Shakesperian Editor, even on his own ground he not unfrequently indulges in critical assertions of the most amazingly paradoxical description. For instance, it is a most significant fact that Mr. White's reading of William Shakspeare's career lands him in these extraordinary conclusions:—

That Shakspeare did his work with no other purpose whatever, moral, philosophic, artistic, literary, than to make an attractive play which would bring him money, should be constantly borne in mind by the critical and reflective reader of his play.—*Shakespeare Studies*, p. 20.

The one point to be constantly kept in mind in the critical consideration of Shakspeare's dramas is that they were written by a second-rate actor, who, much against his will, was compelled to live by the stage in some way, and whose first object was money—to get on in life. He wrote what he wrote merely to fill the theatre and his own pockets. He wrote as he wrote, because he was the poet of poets, the dramatist of dramatists, the philosopher of philosophers, the most world-knowing of all men in the world. There was as much deliberate purpose in his breathing as in his play-writing.—*Ib.*, p. 209.

All that we know of his life and of his dramatic career leaves us no room for doubt that, if his public had preferred it, he would have written thirty-seven plays like *Titus Andronicus*, just as readily, although not just as willingly, as he wrote *As you Like it*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*.

So it seems that the noblest products of human genius and poetic inspiration were only pot-boilers. No wonder that the critic who can pronounce this extraordinary verdict failed to see the significance of the *Promus*. It is however obvious that this is the inevitable consequence of attempting to make the facts of William Shakspeare's life fit the Shakespearean poems, and

one might suppose that it would be taken as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the attempt itself. But no paradox seems too startling for genuine Shakespercan critics when they are offering incense at the Stratford shrine. As to this particular paradox, it is not easy to reconcile Mr. White's theory of the genesis and purpose of the plays, with the fact that such a play as *Troilus and Cressida*, for instance, is quite unsuitable for the stage at all, being so closely packed with deep thought, expressed in the most compact and condensed style, that no audience, even in this century, could be attracted by it. And although the second quarto edition was published with a profession on the title-page, "as it was acted by the King's Majesty's servants at the Globe," yet the preface to the first quarto spoke of it as "a new play, never staled with the stage; never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar," which is a very probable epitome of its entire history as an acted play; for it is hard to believe that the reference in the subsequent edition to the Globe Theatre was anything more than a publisher's puff. Other plays, too, are evidently the product of an overwhelming necessity of utterance, leading to the composition of dramatic poems so enormously long that they cannot possibly be acted without very free abridgment.

The *Promus* seems to help us out of these awkward entanglements. It shows us the author in his study, gathering materials for his work. Those who have studied the *Promus* know how much yet remains to be done in working out its significance. One illustration may be here produced as another specimen of the nuggets that still remain unearthed. *Promus* Note, No. 70, is as follows: "*Turpe proco ancillam sollicitare; est autem virtutis ancilla laus.*" (It is disgraceful for a suitor to solicit [his lady's] handmaid; but praise is the handmaid of virtue). This is quoted by Bacon, as Mrs. Pott points out, in a letter of advice which he wrote to the Earl of Rutland (Life II. 15), in which he urges him to make fame or praise always subordinate to the primary quest of virtue. But the full significance of the motto is best seen in the opening sentences of Bacon's *Apology*, in the following striking passage:—

I cannot be ignorant, and ought to be sensible, of the wrong which I sustain in common speech, as if I had been false or unthankful to that noble but

unfortunate earl, the Earl of Essex; and for satisfying the vulgar sort, I do no so much regard it, though I love good name, but yet as an handmaid and attendant of honesty and virtue. For I am of his opinion that said pleasantly *that it was a shame to him that was a suitor to the mistress to make love to the waiting woman*; and, therefore, to woo or court common fame other than it followeth upon honest courses, I, for my part, find not myself fit nor disposed.

Now, it is a curious fact that this sentiment is almost dragged into a passage in *Love's Labour Lost*, and the Latin motto is so carefully disguised that it looks as if the writer were playing hide and seek with his critical readers. The Princess of France is invited by the King of Navarre to sport in the park, and has a bow put into her hand for shooting the deer. She is perplexed between the attractions of sport and the suggestions of pity, and meditates in Baconian style on the rivalry between her natural tenderness and her ambition to win praise; and then she generalises her perplexity in these words:—

“ And, out of question, so it is sometimes ;  
 Glory grows guilty of detested crimes,  
 When, for fame's sake, for praise, an outward part,  
 We bend to that the working of the heart:  
 As I, for praise alone, now seek to spill  
 The poor deer's blood, that my heart means no ill.”

ACT iv., SC. i.

In this passage, “out of question,” is one of the Baconian variations of *certainly*, or *it is certain*, which is Bacon's habitual formula in generalizing. Nearly all the essays illustrate this form of continuance; it is repeated over sixty times in the essays; and the turn of expression, “out of question,” occurs *verbatim* in two of the essays, Nos. 29 and 58. “Glory” is the *Procus*; “guilty of detested crimes” is *turpe*; the *laus*, *ancilla virtutis* is fame, or praise, “an outward part;” and *ancillam sollicitare* re-appears as, “We bend to that the working of the heart.”

Another indication that these lines are taken *verbatim* out of Bacon's mind, is that the Latin motto occurs also in the Antitheses to Vain Glory; De Aug., book vi., chap. iii., 19th Antithesis. And in the same group of Antitheses, we find *Procus* and *Gloriosus* coupled together; for almost touching the *Procus* we find,—“*Gloriosi semper factiosi, mendaces, mobiles,*

*nimii* ” ( “ Vain glorious persons are ever factious, liars, inconstant, extreme ” ). And two of the remaining mottoes in this group illustrate, indirectly, some other ideas which Bacon had in his mind when he spoke of “ Glory ” as bending to fame or praise the working of his heart. His opinion of Signor Glory, or glorious persons, may be also seen in the 54th essay, “ Of Vain Glory. ” These Shakespeare-Bacon parallelisms are clearly not mere verbal resemblances, fished out of the Concordance, but deep interior identities of thought and allusion.

Vernon Lee (*Contemporary Review*, August, 1886), says that the audiences of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries went to the theatre to hear “ Baconian thoughts in Baconian language; ” and such passages as these, and such evidence as this, unequivocally suggest that these thoughts and this language were supplied by Bacon himself. Indeed it is rather difficult to imagine where “ Baconian thoughts in Baconian language ” could come from but from Bacon himself. Otherwise, we shall fully expect soon to hear of some freak of nature, in which two independent and detached organisms are nourished by the same gastric and digestive apparatus.

R. M. THEOBALD.

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